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National Intelligence Bulletin

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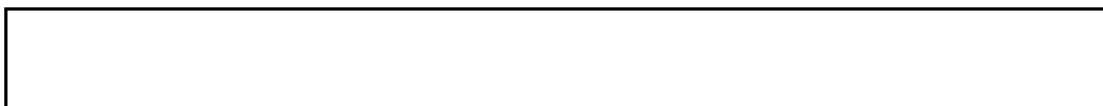
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MOROCCO-ALGERIA

Morocco is planning to attack and occupy the Polisario stronghold of Mahbes sometime this week, [REDACTED]

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A Moroccan minister who is a close confidant of King Hassan told the US ambassador on February 6 that Rabat is in no hurry to take Mahbes. The King had told Arab emissaries, according to the source, that Morocco has no intention of crossing the Algerian border.

The minister said the Algerians would have "weeks" to evacuate the town, but they could not remain there indefinitely. He told the ambassador that Algeria had withdrawn its forces from Tifariti last week by prearrangement—apparently as a result of Egyptian Vice President Mubarak's mediation efforts.

A Saudi official in Rabat gave the US ambassador a similar account of this story yesterday. The Saudi said King Hassan told him that he had issued orders to his military forces not to cross the Algerian border.

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OAU-ANGOLA

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola announced last night that its forces had captured the rail-port complex of Lobito-Benguela. Lobito, Angola's largest port, is deep within the National Union's area of tribal support. Moreover, its capture—which we cannot confirm but which we have regarded as imminent—would end any hope of the National Union being able to survive as a conventional military force in central Angola.

National Union forces are now centered in Bie (Silva Porto) in central Angola and have established a number of outlying defensive positions. It is almost certain, however, that the National Union will be forced to withdraw south to Vila Serpa Pinto before long. Such a withdrawal will put the National Union into an isolated area of Angola from which it will be extremely difficult to launch guerrilla activities against the Popular Movement, such as National Union President Jonas Savimbi hopes to do.

Ugandan President Amin, current chairman of the Organization of African Unity, yesterday announced in effect that the Luanda government of Popular Movement leader Agostinho Neto has been accepted by the OAU as the sole representative of Angola. Consequently, Amin said, Uganda has extended official recognition to the Neto regime.

The announcement by Amin, who played a major role in trying to check the Popular Movement's drive for acceptance as the only legitimate Angolan government, removes any doubt that the Movement will be seated at the OAU ministerial meeting scheduled for later this month.

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SOMALIA

Somalia has launched a diplomatic campaign to gain support in its dispute with France over the incident last week in the French Territory of the Afars and Issas.

The campaign evidently is intended to deflect attention from Mogadiscio's role in backing the terrorist group and to exploit the incident in order to gather support previously lacking for Somalia's position on decolonizing the territory. Mogadiscio is pressing for the withdrawal of all French forces from the territory and its unconditional independence.

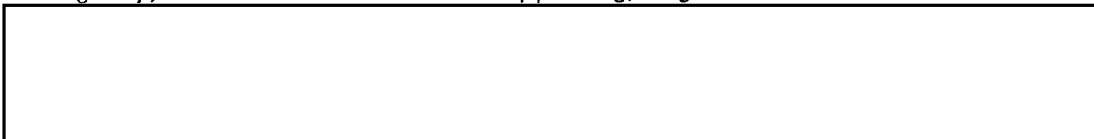
Mogadiscio asked last Thursday for a UN Security Council session to condemn what it called France's "act of unprovoked aggression" against Somalia. Informal talks are continuing at the UN to arrange a date for the meeting. Some African delegates are apparently attempting to persuade Somalia to withdraw its request out of concern a debate will reveal disunity in African ranks.

Somali President Siad and other Somali officials are charging that France and "certain colonialist forces" are threatening to invade Somalia. At a rally on February 6, Siad alleged that 14 warships belonging to France and "other imperialist forces" were at Djibouti.



The Somali army remains in the state of alert declared last Friday. Ethiopia has responded by alerting its armed forces.

Addis Ababa is clearly concerned about the intentions of the Somalis, who closed the border at several points last week. According to the US embassy in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian alert reflects concern, probably overdrawn, that the border insurgency, which Somalia has been supporting, might escalate to overt hostilities.



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USSR

Plans are proceeding for the 25th party congress to convene on February 24. Available information suggests that few major changes are anticipated.

There had been widespread speculation last year that General Secretary Brezhnev would choose the occasion to announce his retirement, but this now appears unlikely. Republic first secretaries who have spoken thus far to their local congresses have paid Brezhnev due homage, suggesting that they believe he will remain at the helm for the time being.

Of the ten republic party congresses concluded to date, analysis of nine available reports indicates an expectation of future stability and of Brezhnev's continuing in office. Georgian party boss Shevardnadze was particularly effusive in describing Brezhnev as embodying the best qualities of the Leninist example. The Central Committee plenum's announcement of December 1 that Brezhnev would be the main speaker at the congress suggests that he has no plans of stepping down at this time.

The upcoming event will focus primarily on domestic issues. A general endorsement of Soviet foreign policy is anticipated, however, and Brezhnev's guiding hand in its success will be roundly praised.

Brezhnev promised in 1972 that a new constitution would be prepared in time for the congress, but in mid-December a Soviet official said there is no prospect of this. According to the official, a constitutional commission has fallen behind in its preparatory work and is reportedly having difficulty defining for the draft document the constitutional role of certain state committees.

The tenth Five-Year Plan, which outlines economic objectives for the 1976-1980 period, was approved by the USSR Supreme Soviet in December and will be submitted to the congress for formal approval. Premier Kosygin will also report on the state of the economy at that time. A 15-year economic plan (1976-1990) was to have been presented, but official silence on this issue makes its introduction doubtful.

The advanced age of many of the Politburo members suggests that some change in its composition could take place.

This congress will be the third held under Brezhnev's leadership, and if it follows previous sessions it will be businesslike and largely ceremonial. Approximately 5,000 delegates from all over the Soviet Union, as well as honorary delegates from nearly 100 countries, are expected to attend the affair, which will last about ten days.

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SPAIN

Two murders in the Basque area this week, including that of the mayor of a Bilbao suburb, may aggravate differences within the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorist organization and could reduce its support among other Basques.

The mayor was a conservative who did not support the terrorist organization's separatist demands. A more militant wing of ETA has claimed credit for the murder, and threatened to execute other local officials who support the Spanish government.

The two killings are only the second and third acts of Basque terrorism since Juan Carlos became king last November. The decrease in violence appears to represent a decision on the part of the Basque terrorists to modify their antigovernment tactics, which had stressed assassination of government officials—especially policemen.

The other terrorist act was the kidnaping on January 24 of a Basque industrialist's son; he reportedly is still being held in southern France by the ETA splinter group of the terrorist organization. The kidnaping provoked anger in the kidnap victim's home town, where a protest demonstration was held. The Basque Nationalist Party—the principal opposition group in the Basque area—also issued a statement attacking the kidnaping. Until now, few Basques had spoken out against terrorist acts.

The dissident ETA faction, believed responsible for all the incidents, apparently differs on tactics with the organization's executive committee. The committee apparently is behind the decision to hold off on further assassinations, following the weakening of the organization by the government's antiterrorist campaign last fall. The dissident group evidently hopes continued terrorist acts will provoke more official repression and prevent the government from instituting limited regional autonomy in place of the separate nation the terrorists want.

Interior Minister Fraga has stated that the government will not allow "marginal" terrorist acts to block political reforms. Signs of Basque disapproval of the latest terrorist acts may make it easier for the government to continue with its plans. Opposition groups are worried, however, that the killing may damage their campaign in the Basque area and in Barcelona for a general amnesty for political offenses.

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NATO

The ad hoc committee on equipment compatibility held its first meeting on February 5 and approved the formation of five working groups to recommend ways to improve NATO's military capabilities.

The various groups will initially study the compatibility of tactical communications, interchangeability of ammunition, standardization of fuel, cross-servicing of aircraft, and status of existing standardization agreements.

Despite the fact that one of the most serious drawbacks to effective operations is the diversity of land, sea, and air communications systems, the allies have plans to introduce six new, incompatible tactical communications systems in the next several years. The working group in this area was urged to recommend a single compatible system and foster common links among existing national nets.

Another problem concerns the lack of interchangeability of ammunition for guns in main battle tanks. The more than 13,000 tanks in alliance inventories consist of seven different models and are equipped with three different calibers of major guns. In addition, the various types of ammunition manufactured for the guns of the same caliber often have differing characteristics, and some are not interchangeable. NATO states plan to replace some 10,000 tanks over the next 10 to 15 years; compatibility of weapons prior to then would be thus desirable.

Attention will also be directed to adopting common or interchangeable fuels for aircraft and ships. Major NATO facilities generally can provide basic services for aircraft of other countries but are often unable to provide additional support and supplies necessary for operational sorties.

The fifth working group is tasked to review the status of some 600 standardization agreements, at least 90 of which relate to equipment standardization. Assessments of their relative importance are to be made as well as cost determinations.

The five working groups are to identify the most serious problems, recommend solutions, and formulate procedures to ensure compatibility of future materiel. The ad hoc committee is to provide an interim report to the NATO ministers in May and a final report in December.

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ARGENTINA

President Peron may be on the verge of losing her only remaining source of significant support. Some labor leaders are for the first time expressing a willingness to see the army oust her.

Unionists are said to be angry over their systematic exclusion from government decision-making, which is now monopolized by a small circle of Peron's personal advisers. For many union bosses the last straw was the dismissal of the respected economy minister, Antonio Cafiero.

To make matters even worse, the President is openly seeking to renew relations with dissident unionist Victorio Calabro, the governor of Buenos Aires Province, whom she and labor leaders read out of the Peronist movement some months ago. Calabro has long been the single most important challenger to labor's two paramount chiefs, who until now have tried to protect labor's stake in Peronism by backing the President.

Union heads met on Monday to discuss a response to the administration; one strategy proposed is that all labor representatives in the congress and government resign simultaneously.

A complete break between the labor movement and the administration would remove a major impediment to a military takeover. One labor leader has reportedly assured the military that workers would raise only symbolic resistance to a coup. Reluctance to involve troops in clashes with resisting workers has been an important consideration to officers who have so far hesitated to move against the government.

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